

Survivor's Reaction

Recognizing a rape victim's emotional state can help you to be more understanding.

Emotional shock: I feel so numb. Why am I so calm? Why can't I cry?

Disbelief: Did it really happen? Why me?

Embarrassment: What will people think? No. I can't tell my family.

Shame: I feel so dirty, like there is something wrong with me now. I want to wash my hands all day long.

Guilt: I feel as if I did something to make this happen. If only I had...

Depression: How am I going to go on? I feel so tired and hopeless.

Powerlessness: Will I ever feel in control again?

Disorientation: I can't sit still. I'm having trouble getting through the day. I'm just overwhelmed.

Retriggering: I keep having flashbacks. I wish they would stop.

Denial: Wasn't it "just" a rape?

Fear: I'm afraid of so many things. Will I get pregnant or get VD? Am I safe? Can people tell what's happened to me? Will I ever want to be intimate again? Will I ever get over this? I'm afraid I'm going crazy.

Anxiety: I'm a nervous wreck! I have trouble breathing. (Anxiety is often expressed in physical symptoms, like difficulty breathing or muscle tension, sleep disturbances, change in eating habits, nausea, stomach problems, nightmares, bedwetting.)

Anger: I want to KILL him!

--Reprinted from *Surviving Sexual Assault*, edited by Rochel Grossman.